

MAR 1952 51-46

CLASSIFICATION RESTRICTED
 SECURITY INFORMATION
 CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY.
 INFORMATION FROM
 FOREIGN DOCUMENTS OR RADIO BROADCASTS

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REPORT NO.

CD NO. --

COUNTRY French Union
 SUBJECT Political - Administration
 HOW PUBLISHED Daily newspaper
 WHERE PUBLISHED Dakar
 DATE PUBLISHED 4 Dec 1952
 LANGUAGE French

DATE OF INFORMATION 1952

DATE DIS. 27 Feb 1953

NO. OF PAGES 4

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

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SOURCE Paris-Dakar.INTEGRATION OF OVERSEAS TERRITORIES INTO FRENCH UNION

Comment: On 3 December 1952, the Council of the Republic (of France) devoted its attention to the problem of the integration of France's overseas territories into the French Republic. Pierre Pflimlin, Minister of Overseas France, made a speech in reply to questions posed by a number of council members, and the council adopted a resolution expressing its views on the subject. The following report is a summary of the account given on this matter by the Dakar daily, Paris-Dakar, of 4 December 1952.

French Guinea Representative Calls for Statement of Principles

At a recent session of the Council of the Republic, Raphael Saller, IOM (Independant d'Outre-Mer, Overseas Independent) member from French Guinea, asked Pierre Pflimlin, Minister of Overseas France, for a statement of the principles and means whereby the French government intends to guarantee the following to the peoples of the overseas territories and associated territories of the French Republic:

1. The rights, freedoms, and political institutions, as well as the administrative organization promised by the Constitution of 27 October 1946, which are intended to safeguard the general interests of both Metropolitan France and the above-mentioned territories.
2. An economic and social structure which satisfies both the exigencies of the modern world and the local traditions of the territories.

In expressing his viewpoint, Saller made the following statement:

"We certainly do not have the right to determine the orientation of the political evolution of the overseas territories; they must do this themselves, and our role should consist in giving them the means of making their choice. Under present conditions, with the world divided into two ideologies, it is equally important to Metropolitan France and to the overseas territories to preserve their solidarity.

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"As for France, its rank, its economic power, even its independence is at stake. Where, in fact, would she rank among world powers with just her 40 million inhabitants? Thus, France has an imperative need for the overseas territories.

"It is just as obvious that the territories have great need of France. It is well known that the Africans get along better with the French than with other nationalities. To become modern nations, these territories lack, not the capacity, but capital and technical knowledge. They know that in today's struggle for economic power and influence, there is no longer any place for small countries. Unless they are to renounce their emancipation, they need the presence of a more highly developed nation to guide and help them, and this nation can only be France."

Other Council Members Express their Viewpoints

French Senator Suzanne Schreiber Cremieux, a member of the RGR (Rassemblement des Gauches Republicaines, Rally of Republican Leftists), who knows the Black African territories well, having visited them four times, made the following statement in the course of the discussion:

"People have spoken of, and will continue to speak of, the wealth of the soil. As for myself, I have been especially interested in places where poverty has been the rule. I am especially familiar with poorly exploited lands ravaged by famine. To relieve the deficit in human resources which some speakers have mentioned, we must first feed the people, treat their illnesses, and then teach them.

"Admittedly, I have seen extraordinary administrators, and exceptional women assisting them. On the whole, however, they think too much in terms of administration and too little in terms of social needs. Some of them do not even know what a social worker is. The missionary societies understand this problem well, and the African members of their sisterhoods, thanks to their knowledge of the dialects and customs, render great service.

"We must also teach. We have built many schools, it is true, but have we thought of teaching agricultural and manual skills in keeping with the possibilities of the territories? We have been criticized for turning out college graduates, which we undoubtedly need; but they are not sufficient. We must think above all of educating the African woman."

During the session on 3 December 1952, Louis Ignacio-Pinto, RI (Republicains Independants, Independent Republicans) member from Dahomey, emphasized the need to modernize and equip the territories.

Pflimlin Emphasizes Determination for Unity

Answering miscellaneous questions on interpretation of the Constitution in matters pertaining to assimilation and association of the peoples of the French Union, Pflimlin emphasized that the Council of the Republic was now dealing with territories integrated into one indivisible republic. "That is the firm ground on which I intend to stand," he added.

"It is important to note," continued Pflimlin, "that, contrary to historic European precedent, we began by establishing the territorial assemblies. We should now be concerned with instituting the local assemblies in which the people will receive training in democracy. These assemblies must not be carbon copies of Metropolitan French institutions; we owe it to ourselves to demonstrate our ingenuity."

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Having emphasized that a source of French pride is "the citizenship we have conferred on all peoples of the French Union," the minister declared that he would have wished that certain skeptics (sometimes to be found at assemblies of even the highest international level), could have witnessed this debate, because it proved that the overseas representatives express themselves with the same freedom and authority as those of Metropolitan France.

Referring to relations between the French Union and the European community, and to the Strasbourg Plan in particular, Pflimlin declared that he could not help but share the uneasiness of those who feared that the French Union might become the common property of the European community. "That," he said, "would be to show a low regard for a national heritage and a living reality, not to mention considerable interests."

However, Pflimlin said he would not entirely agree with Michel Debre, RPF, in the latter's attempt to establish a chronological connection between the French Union and the Western European Union.

In economic matters, Pflimlin emphasized the effective solidarity between Metropolitan France and the far-flung French territories. Developing this point, he stated: "We must lead underdeveloped countries toward a progressive economic development. Experience teaches us that it is difficult to make unequally developed communities live together under the same economy. The only way to succeed in this task is to protect new industries in new countries and to develop productivity simultaneously with the raising of the standard of living. Therefore, we must not limit ourselves to generous but dispersed efforts; we must develop a plan which has been carefully conceived so that individual efforts will be additive and not neutralize each other."

"There is no opposition, and there must be none, between the social and economic factor," Pflimlin continued. "Certainly, the latter is only a means; our goal is the human being. Nevertheless, we must not fail to recognize that social development should rest on an economic basis. The advantages of joint economic and social development are manifested in the increased purchasing power which improves living conditions for the entire population."

"In matters of foreign trade," he said, "we are not absolutely free, especially to establish protective tariffs or to fix quotas of distribution. We have had to choose or to make adaptations according to the territories or the products. But the essential idea has been to allow the idea of preference to prevail without pushing protectionism too far."

Pflimlin acknowledged that the protection of French overseas products against foreign competition on the French market has at times been insufficient or even nonexistent but added that France's shortage of foreign exchange often produced results tantamount to protection.

Pflimlin stated that in 1951, exports from the French Overseas Territories to France and the French Union reached 129 billion francs, or 78 percent of their total exports. Inversely, 197 billion francs, or 78 percent, of the imports of the French Overseas Territories were from France or from the French Union.

"This solidarity in the economic order," concluded Pflimlin, "must be accompanied by a will for unity in the political order and decentralization in the overseas institutions. The people of Africa and Madagascar have chosen the French Union, which respects their autonomy and personality, their true progress and freedom. While ignoring our disparagers, we can demonstrate to the world that, in contrast to those political structures where only force is able to maintain unity, it has been possible for French genius to establish a vast community of which the keystone is singleness of purpose."

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Council Supports Decentralization and Equal Rights

At the close of the discussion, the senators adopted a resolution by Sal-
lér and Lafleur asking the French government "to perfect the integration of the
overseas territories into the French Republic by applying a policy of decentrali-
zation and solidarity which would guarantee the following:

1. The material and spiritual well-being of the people through the devel-
opment of economic activities, intellectual emancipation, and the exercise of
the political freedoms recognized by the Constitution.

2. The indivisibility of the French Republic and the unity of its parti-
cipation in international and supranational organisms without any distinction
between its constituent territories.

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